644 The sogoné may not wear trousers. He wears a type of
357 drawers called benda. All the nanamsé (plural of naba) have
292 followed the example of Naba Warga, and nowadays the most insignificant kombéré has at least a dozen sogoné.

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The Napogré. General Conditions. Number of Wives of the Emperor Today. Ornaments.

644 Depending on whether the napagha is destined for the chief
595 himself or for one of his brothers or sons, the instruction of the napogré are given either in the quarters of the pugtiéma (first wife of the naba) or at the home of one of the old nabissi.

644 Water is heated and in it is put a bit of karite butter and other
595 ingredients. After the girl's head, armpits, and pubic hair have
302 been shaved by some old women, the pugtiéma or the old man dips a hand into the water, utters certain cabalistic words, and gives the names of all the chiefs who have succeeded each other up to the father of the current ruler.

644 The water is then given to the old women who bathe the
595 young napagha. It is at this time that she is instructed in the duties and obligations of the napogré, what she may do and what she should avoid.

[301] The new wife is then adorned with bracelets, kouaba (plural of kobré), and with rouamba [ankle rings], or with only bracelets. The chief may marry her at once or, depending on the circumstances, send her to the man for whom she is destined.

[684] The napagha must never have relations with any man other than her husband as long as she lives. Formerly she was pitilessly killed if she broke this rule. [162]

[302 As we have just seen, the napagha has no hair, and this is
301] the primary distinctive mark. Also, she wears bracelets on her wrists, sometimes even on her arms and some on her ankles (this is done mostly by favorites). Finally some wear kouaba, ornaments most often worn by old women.

The number of wives or napagha varies according to the importance of the naba and especially according to the desires of naba. According to the 1926 census, the present Mogho Naba had thirty-seven wives.

301 As ornaments the Moaga woman had only red or yellow copper bracelets and the kindifou (a bright red bead). Even then only women of means could procure such ornaments. The [435] kindifou cost only 50 cowries a bead, but since cowries were monopolized by the naba, notables, and rakangba (prosperous Mossi), the beads were far too expensive for the small resources of the average Moaga woman.

Bracelets made of a special stone (a mixture of gray and white) and called manekagcé (manekaka in the singular) were worn only by the Yarbi (young Yarcé of both sexes). It is said [439] that these bracelets were peddled by the Kibissi (Habé), and they seem to have come from the Timbuktu area.

301 554 Silver bracelets were worn only by the dimbissi (descendants of dima, that is, the family of the Mogho Naba), by kombemba (canton and province chiefs) and their descendants, and, finally, by prominent persons who were in favor at court.

291 177 At the present time, especially at Ouagadougou, the women adorn themselves with garments of all kinds (skirts of native material, bazin, godé, and other fabrics, as well as skirts from stores). Some have even adopted the blouse and ample robe affected by [352] elegant Sudanese [228] women. Many now own trunks which replace the sacks formerly used to store their clothing.

291 178 The Senegalese handkerchief, a head scarf, is now considered absolutely indispensable. In rural areas there is an increasing desire to dress better. More cotton is grown. Girls and women from the bush buy glass beads of all colors when they come to Ouagadougou to work, and they wear them around their necks or around their hips in the manner of Bambara women.

416 Although the "mirror" used to be the clear water of springs and brooks, there is hardly a woman today who does not have one or two mirrors. Finally, a bit of elegance is added to the wild 301 beauty of the women by silver earrings, bracelets, and amulets sewed in a panther skin -- these are becoming a passion with Mossi peasant women.

291 It should not be inferred from the above that the Moaga always feels obliged to wear clothing at home. Any time that he has no need to go out or to visit a friend or relative at some

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Mossi Girl.

From the Mission of the
White Fathers at Ouagadougou.

1: Delobsom--159 I-5 (no date) 1933 FA28 Mossi FA28

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Mossi Woman Spinning.
From the Mission of the White
Fathers at Ouagadougou.

/4/ BOOK I. POLITICAL LIFE

Chapter 1. The Country and Its Inhabitants

142 Although the Mossi is not a handsome type of Black, there is nothing disagreeable about him. He is rather tall, with lively eyes, woolly hair, flat nose, occasionally rather fine features, lips which are broad without being too thick, and cheeks heavily marked with three parallel lines running from the temples to the chin and a fourth leading perpendicularly from the nose to the other three. His limbs are muscular, and his color neither ebony nor copper but an intermediate hue.

291 He acquires a truly attractive and resolute air when he dresses in festive clothes, with his broad, dark blue, Zouave-like trousers, his loose shirt made of white and blue fabric strips which falls lightly over the arms, and on the right shoulder his doré, a weapon consisting
411 of a slightly bent iron rod, flattened at one end and terminating at the other in a ring hafted perpendicularly to a short stick. His wrist
● [30] is often adorned with a copper bracelet, and he nearly always carries at his waist a stiff knife, enclosed in a leather sheath which ends in a tuft of leather strips with cowries attached to them. He wears a
291 cap made of two diamond-shaped pieces of colored fabric half-sewn together; the two free ends may serve to cover the ears and cheeks, but are usually worn raised in the shape of a tiara. A great fighter, he wields the knife with dexterity or strikes with the doré which can become a dangerous club.

173 The Mossi are a conquering people. They have not always lived
648 in the territory they now occupy. But where did they come from?
643 The elders questioned all say that their people came from Gambaga (British Gold Coast), and this is why the Moro Naba Wobro took refuge in Gambaga when he was dethroned by the French conquest; this is also why the naba of Gambaga is notified whenever a Moro Naba dies, and why the shoes, cap, and scepter of command of the deceased are sent to him as gifts to be laid on the ancestral tomb. Gifts are also sent to the naba of Fada N'Gourma, which the Mossi call "Bingo." When the Moro Naba dies, his bow and quiver are presented to the

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2:Mangin--19a M-5 (ca. 1910) 1921 FA28 Mossi FA28

A Mossi Province Chief.

The Moro Naba of the Mossi.

644 The arms of the sorone are ornamented with two, three, or four copper
[301] bracelets, often of alternate yellow and red metal. Sometimes they wear them at the wrists and above the elbow, and occasionally both ankles are adorned with thick bracelets or even with copper gaiters which make walking quite difficult but which are prized very highly.
[201] All these pages wait on the monarch hand and foot. If he coughs, they all rub the palms of their hands together and snap their fingers. This is repeated /18/ even when he drinks, sneezes, or spits. If he rises, the whole court rises, and when he feels those needs common to all mortals, the whole court follows and squats as he does.

644 On important feast days, the naba is followed by music, and every
533 time he makes a gesture, says a word, or takes a step, the musicians
534 play on various kinds of drums. The typical drum peculiar to Mossi country, bindre, which only the members of the drummers' guild are allowed to play, is made of a gourd which may reach 70 or 80 centimeters in diameter. The calabash is emptied, and the side where the stem was attached is removed and replaced with a tightly stretched
533 goat skin. By hitting this skin with his hands, the artist draws many different sounds from his instrument. It is quite an art to play this drum well, and the members of the guild are trained to it from childhood. They are the troubadours, the griot of the country; they sing the praises of chiefs whose genealogies they know by heart, they frequent the markets, they follow the rich and proclaim them to be the bravest, the most generous, the most handsome men this world has ever known, for the sake of a few gifts. They attend all festivities.

534 Another instrument is the lounga, made of a hollowed piece of wood shaped like an hourglass; the two ends are rather broad and joined by a narrow cylinder. This drum is carried under the arm, and its two openings are closed with goat skins joined by cords. The artist stretches these cords more or less tightly by clasping the drum between his arm and the left side of his body, while he hits one of the skins with a small curved stick ending in a little ball and held in his right hand.

The naba's orchestra also includes flutes, from which the natives, especially the Peul, draw pretty but monotonous sounds, and small one-string violins which give forth pleasing tones under a skillful bow.

644 If the Moro Naba is to ride on horseback, the grooms bring his
492 mount magnificently decked out in a copper headstall and a large embroidered rug which covers its back and rump completely. A piece of embroidered cloth hides the horse's chest, and the Arab-type saddle,

535 /38/ To tell the truth, however, the Mossi do not know how to dance. With the exception of the circumcision dance and of some villages of dancers where people devote themselves methodically to choreography, the greater part of the population do not know how to dance gracefully. This does not prevent them, one and all, from indulging in the dance. Men and women dance separately. The most common male dance consists of a rapid motion of the upper part of the body, from left to right and right to left; the feet do not leave the ground, and they are moved forward very slowly. The arms are bent up to shoulder height and away from the body; the fingers are extended, and arms and hands shake along with the rest of the body. When performed by professionals, who are sometimes found in the villages, this motion is rather graceful but lacks breadth of style.

[292] The dancers wear a cardboard headpiece, its crest adorned with a band of cowries and its sides often embellished with bits of mirror fragments, feathers, and all sorts of small, gaudy articles. The upper part of the body is covered with a tight, wide-meshed garment, decorated at the waist with pompons or cowries and small bells. The dancer wears

[301] on the middle finger a piece of iron which looks like a large clam shell, and on his thumb an iron ring. He strikes one against the other in rhythm. His wrist is often adorned with a bracelet made of several of these iron shells; hanging from them are small strips of the same metal which clang at the slightest motion. Those who do not have a costume deck themselves out in tawdry finery.

The women dance two at a time, each by herself, spinning around and assuming whatever poses they consider most graceful. When they come near one another, they turn around and strike their backs together; then one of the two withdraws, and another takes her place. All the while, the women spectators clap their hands in rhythm and sing. Sometimes one of them utters a shrill cry to arouse the dancers or to laud one who has proved unusually graceful and lithe.

[831] There are no special dances for the dead, and Mossi dances apparently do not have the obscenity of some Negro dances.

857 But to return to the children. It may be stated, as a general rule, that children can do as they please as long as they help out with everyday tasks, as long as the son helps his father and the daughter her mother. Happily there are exceptions to this, and some parents watch their children quite closely, but these are exceptions. Boys

593 prefer their mother to their father, because the latter must often

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2:Mangin--49a M-5 (ca. 1910) 1921 FA28 Mossi FA28

Tattooed Mossi Youth.

Tattooed Mossi Women.

852 shaved strips on top of the head, while the sides are shaved similarly
[302] in semi-circular strips. On the seventh day, people who were previously circumcised bring chickens to sacrifice to the spirits of the paths so that all will go well, but the newly circumcised take no part in the proceedings. The children wash, oil themselves, and put on their
852 beautiful clothes. Everything is brand new, the breechcloth, the
292 trousers, the shirt, the blanket, and the headgear. The belt is adorned
● 301 with a knife in a leather sheath and with a needle case which has at the end a tuft of leather strips with cowries attached to them. They
[776] hold a cow's tail, also adorned with cowries, to drive off the scheuyan spirits who dislike little rascals and people who dress too well. Both wrists are adorned with copper bracelets. Needless to say, this flashy new outfit with its cowries that clang like bells lures the eye and bewitches the young boys, who decide to be circumcised at the first opportunity so they too may eat well and wear beautiful clothes.

852 /44/ The circumcised boys continue to walk bent over, leaning on
[48] their sticks, but their crude staff is replaced with two sticks decorated with burnt designs and tied together. They no longer wear a tail. They go to greet the chiefs, and they thank those who have given them gifts. They walk to the sound of the large drum, since the bindré is forbidden at circumcision ceremonies, and sing plaintive chants to the spirits. They parade in the marketplace and display their clothes in
[535] the villages. They dance before the chiefs, and their dances are very graceful indeed. They dance in unison to the beat of the drum, making the same gestures all together or two by two, varying the figures in accordance with the beat. After seven days the festivities are over, and they all return to their families and take up everyday life as though nothing had happened.

We shall now study this everyday life.

/45/ BOOK III. DAILY WORK AND TRADES

Chapter 1. Occupations of a Mossi

221 The Mossi are essentially cultivators, and it may be said that no
241 Mossi who works at a trade will fail to cultivate his fields when the

323 a hollow. Straw, twigs, or pieces of bark are laid between the jars and even inside them. Then everything is covered with straw and set afire in the evening. The smaller the jar, the more heat is needed. The women fetch their goods the following morning. Some of the jars are cracked; others, insufficiently fired, would be too porous and must be fired again; the rest are gathered and sold at the market.

322 Woodworking is done by men. They use a hatchet to cut down the trees, an adze and a knife to work the lumber. The mortars and pestles used by the women to crush maize, herbs, peanuts, and sauce ingredients are made of wood, and so are the dishes shaped like gourds, the bowls for sarabo, and the tool handles. There are also stools of a rather peculiar shape. Those women who can afford them close their huts with crude wooden doors. All these industries, however, are quite primitive and of no great interest.

326 The iron and copper work is so distinctive that those who practice
[564] it could only be specialists. The smiths, in fact, form a separate caste. One is born a smith, but one becomes a jeweller, since this
[306] profession is open to everyone. The smiths extract the metal and make iron tools: hoes, hatchets, adzes, and knives. It is said that no layman is allowed to watch when they extract the iron from the ore, and this would explain why the natives do not know how it is done. As I was unable to visit Yatenga, the area where most iron workers are to be found, I am not familiar with the extracting process.

326 /59/ The jewellers occasionally work with iron, but they do so on
306 the sly. They may repair broken tools, sharpen hatchets and arrow tips, and re-use a piece of iron, for instance, make an old hoe into
● [30] nails, hinges, etc. Their main task, however, is the manufacture of all sorts of bracelets and of all the copper ornaments in a horse's harness: headstall, bit, spurs, stirrups, and the copper plates which hang from the saddle. These plates are a strange ornament which seems peculiar to the Mossi. They may reach 40 centimeters in diameter, and their edge may be as wide as 10 centimeters. The naba and the wealthy horsemen fasten them behind the stirrups, on either
[415] side of the saddle, where they hang down the horse's flanks. Servants sometimes use them to drink beer when they have no other containers. To smelt the iron or copper, the Mossi use charcoal which they obtain exactly in the same manner as our /French/ colliers. The fire is kept going with a double bellows made of the skin of goats or sheep and operated by a child. The red-hot iron is hammered with a cylindrical

114 distant past, since we must place Rawa, the first conqueror of
174 Ouagadougou and Ouahigouya (see further on), in the twelfth century A. D., and his parents came from Dagomba where it is clear the Mossi have lived for some time. The crossing of Haoussa and Djerma by the forefathers of the Dagomba Mossi takes us back to a period that obviously cannot be precisely established, but which is definitely earlier than the fourteenth century (when the Mossi conquered Timbuktu), and one must recognize, contrary to Captain Lambert's opinion, that the Mossi who took Timbuktu came from the south (probably from Ouahigouya) and not from the east (the Say region). We would like to point out /5/ also that they were a great deal closer to Timbuktu in Ouahigouya than in Say. Once this point has been cleared up and the ensuing mistakes corrected, the plausibility of the discovery of the road followed by the Mossi who came from Bornu (if they came from there), which was re-traced by Captain Lambert, is acceptable.

These observations also apply to the continuation of Captain Lambert's report. He says that the wars waged by the second Songhaï empire against the Mossi (sixteenth century) forced the latter to leave the Djerma country to go southwest toward Dagomba. Obviously, all of this is quite inaccurate, but, without accepting Captain Lambert's cause for the emigration and his establishing it further in the past, we can accept the route he traces.

174 "This movement," says Captain Lambert, speaking of the march from Djerma to Dagomba, "took place in a southerly direction, and the Mossi, after having followed the Niger River, crossed it at a point located between Say and Ilo, but much closer to Ilo.

"North of Ilo, the custom of shaving the heads of the chieftains' [30] [302] wives still persists. These women also wear metal leggings (1), par-

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1. Captain Lambert undoubtedly is referring to the beautiful copper leggings, about 20 centimeters high, worn by the rich Mossi women.

ticularly characteristic of the Mossi peoples and sometimes encountered among peoples who have been in contact with them.

"From this point, the migration, leaving the Bariba country on the left (2), went in a straight line through Gourma and the Pama region

326 In short, the blacksmith's profession is of greater consequence to him than anything else, although he avails himself of several other occupations.

[564] Mossi blacksmiths do not form a caste. That is to say, anyone can marry among them.

306 Let us proceed to the jewelers or copper workers (niaka in Mossi).
439 The Mossi have been familiar with copper for a long time, although West Africa does not produce it. The Yarsé have sought it at Ouanké, Kintampo, and even Kumasi from times immemorial. It comes from the coastal area, where it is brought by the Whites in the form of brass rods 30 or 40 centimeters long (like curtain rods). Nowadays, it is the British who supply the Gold Coast with copper, no doubt in the wake of the Portuguese and Dutch.

306 The niaka earns more money than the blacksmith. He buys the
301 copper rods from the Dioula and makes them into various items /517/ such as women's copper leggings adorned with crocodiles, and thick copper bracelets worn at the wrists and ankles by women and soroné (pages). Depending on their thickness, these bracelets sell for 2,500 [435] to 20,000 cowries. He also makes women's copper hairpins, and low-price rings worth from 100 to 200 cowries.

306 Prior to the arrival of the French, these jewelers also made
632 copper objects depicting everyday scenes, landscapes, huts. The chiefs bought them, but now these objects, at least the more ancient ones, have become very difficult to obtain. It seems that the German physician Frobenius, when he passed through Mossi territory at the end of 1908, acquired some very beautiful specimens of ancient Mossi manufacture for an exorbitant price. Nowadays, one [439] can imagine what the old industry was like by looking at the small items made at Ouagadougou by a few Europeanized Mossi who sell them on the spot for the benefit of local Whites. It might almost be said, therefore, that they manufacture them for export purposes. These items, made by the lost-wax process, are rather interesting and quite artistic for Blacks.

325 The tools of the niaka are about the same as those of the black-
306 smith:
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1. The small portable anvil or kissiguiré.
2. The hammer or kouadara.
3. Shears (niougou) to pick copper pieces from the fire.

The Mossi grow tobacco in fields around their

homesteads, where they also cultivate their most important cash crops, cotton and indigo, which are used in the manufacture and dyeing of cotton cloth.

The wild fauna of Mossi country include several species of antelope, deer, monkeys, rabbits, snakes, and wild pigs. Elephants roam the beds of rivers and streams and often destroy cultivated fields, while lions and hyenas distress the people by attacking livestock. The pools and rivers of Mossi country are inhabited by turtles, crocodiles, and various species of scaled and scaleless fish. Chickens, muscovy ducks, and half-domesticated guinea fowl are the most valuable species of birds.

The Mossi have long been famous for their splendid donkeys and horses. Donkeys are sometimes ridden, but they are used primarily as beasts of burden. Horses are important for military and ceremonial purposes and for export to the tsetse-fly zones to the south. The Mossi raise two main types of cattle: a zebu-like animal in the northern regions and a dwarf variety in the south. These animals are raised primarily for their milk and for export, and are seldom killed for meat until they are fairly old. Goats and sheep provide the main source of meat. Hog-raising is not widespread, and seems to be declining in importance with the increased observance of Islamic food taboos, which is on the uprise even among people who are still pagans.

The subsoil of Mossi country is not well known, but so far there have been no major discoveries of mineral deposits. The only known gold field remained unworked in aboriginal times. The Mossi do not like to wear gold ornaments, preferring jewelry worked from imported copper and silver. The northern Mossi worked their local iron in aboriginal times, but those in the south obtained this metal from caravan traders.

The nineteenth-century reports of Barth and other European travelers indicate that the Mossi conducted a rather extensive foreign trade. At least six caravan routes passed through their territory, and traders such as the Hausa and Mandingo visited the important Mossi trading centers at Yako, Pouitenga, and Ouagadougou, where they exchanged Saharan and forest products for Mossi livestock and cloth.[5]

The Mossi belong to the Voltaic culture area, a name given by Delafosse to the regions drained by the Black, Red, and White Voltas and their tributaries. The area embraces parts of Mali, the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, the Upper Volta, and northern Ghana.[6] It includes a vast congeries of peoples such as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Dagari, Birifo, Senufo, Gurmanche, Gurunsi, Lobi, Bobo, Tallensi, Konkomba, Dogon, Somba, Fulse, and Ninisi, all of whom speak languages belonging to the Gur or Moshi-Grunshi group of

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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595 who did live at the palace, only a small minority prepared the ruler's meals
644 and shared his bed. Dim Delobson reports that Mogho Naba Kom II (1905–42) had thirty-seven wives. His son, Mogho Naba Sagha II (1942–
[177] 57), had twenty.[34] The present Mogho Naba, Kougri, recently married
[178] according to Western tradition and is officially monogamous.[35] There seems to be a general trend toward fewer wives among Mossi chiefs.

643 Mossi rulers never married for the purpose of forming state alliances,
581 and their marriages had no political significance. The Mogho Naba's mar-
582 riages were exogamous with regard to the royal lineage and to his mother's minimal lineage. Aside from these restrictions, however, the Mogho Naba could marry women from any Mossi lineage or group, including serfs, slaves, and foreign populations. It is said that when Mogho Naba Sanum (1850–90) despaired of having an heir by a Mossi woman, he took a Fulani wife.[36]

643 The Mogho Naba had no formal wedding ceremony. The task of intro-
586 ducing a new wife to the royal harem fell to the Pughtiema. She and her
[302] assistants welcomed the wife in a prescribed fashion. First they shaved all the hair from her body. They then bathed her in warm water to which shea butter and ritual herbs had been added, and during the bath they recited the ruler's genealogy to impress her with her new status.[37] The Pughtiema advised her on the need for proper deportment, and warned her that
[301] adultery was punished by death. To close the ceremony, a smith fastened to the girl's wrists and ankles the silver or brass bracelets that identified her as a wife of the Mogho Naba. If the bride was still a child, she was often allowed to return to her father's house until she reached childbearing age. If she was past the age of puberty, her marriage was consummated without further ceremony, and she joined the ranks of the ruler's wives.

644 The wives who lived in the palace were divided into three groups. The
595 first group included the wives who lived with the Pughtiema in a section of the palace harem called the *zaka sanga* ("large courtyard"). These women were all past childbearing age and no longer received nocturnal visits from the Mogho Naba. They had their own fields in the vicinity of the palace and cultivated them with the aid of the samande-kamba, the pages they had adopted, and their own children. The women of the second group, those of the *zagbilin* ("small courtyard"), were mostly in their thirties or forties and still sexually active. They received occasional visits from the Mogho Naba, but fewer than his younger wives. These women also cultivated their fields with the help of the young men of the court.

The third group of wives, the *dogunba* ("keepers of the household"), was the most important. The dogunba prepared the ruler's meals and satis-